

Reps. Matsui, Courtney, Petri Secure Support for “Troops to Teachers” Amendment in Defense Authorization Bill

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REPS. MATSUI, COURTNEY, PETRI SECURE SUPPORT FOR “TROOPS TO TEACHERS” AMENDMENT IN DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION BILL

Bipartisan, Bicameral Effort Will Expand Opportunities for Returning Troops to Teach in Nation’s Schools

WASHINGTON, DC -- Representatives Doris Matsui (D-CA), Joe Courtney (D-CT) and Tom Petri (R-WI) today secured support for an amendment to the FY 2011 National Defense Authorization Act to expand the existing Troops to Teachers (TTT) program. The amendment -- which is based on bipartisan, bicameral legislation that was introduced in the Senate by Sens. John McCain (R-AZ) and Michael Bennett (D-CO) -- will reduce existing eligibility requirements in TTT, thereby opening the program to more Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. The comprehensive National Defense Authorization legislation is expected to be voted on by the House of Representatives later today.

“With their proven service, diverse backgrounds, and leadership traits, our nation’s veterans can serve their country again by teaching in our nation’s most vulnerable schools,” said Rep. Matsui. “Witnessing the success of this program in schools in my own community has only strengthened my determination to expand the Troops to Teachers program -- and the Courtney/Petri/Matsui Amendment is an important step forward in doing so.”

“Our men and women in uniform are a dedicated, dependable and valuable cog in today’s workforce,” Courtney said. “Expanding this program will not only benefit veterans who wish to become teachers, but it will have a positive impact on young people across the country. Troops to Teachers put positive role models and fresh faces from diverse backgrounds into classrooms -- a win-win situation.”

“I have been a supporter of the Troops to Teachers Program since its authorization in 1994,” Petri said. “Troops to Teachers has proven very effective in transitioning qualified personnel into second careers in teaching. Participants fill several critical needs among educators: 80 percent are male, over one-third are ethnic minorities, and a majority bring an expertise in science and math to the classroom. However, a simple drafting error in the 2002 No Child

Left Behind Act resulted in an Education Department ruling restricting the number of school districts in which veterans can fulfill their teaching requirement. Our amendment fixes that error and will put more veterans in the classroom.”

The Troops to Teachers program, originally created in 1994, provides qualified troops with financial incentives to teach in the nation’s neediest schools, but unfortunately only included a relatively small number of districts nationwide. Since its inception, TTT has placed over 12,000 veterans in our nation’s classrooms.

Today’s amendment reduces the threshold of service requirements for those who have served since 9/11 from six years to four years, making many Iraq and Afghanistan veterans eligible for the program’s \$5,000 education stipend. This amendment is designed to allow participants to teach at any school that receives Title I funds. This change would result in a 49-percent increase in the number of schools eligible for TTT.

The amendment also establishes a Troops to Teachers Advisory Board to be composed of the DOD director of the program, a representative from the Department of Education and representatives from state TTT offices and veterans service organizations. This board would develop best practices for improving recruitment of eligible service members into the program, increase awareness within eligible school systems, and coordinate the goals of the program with other federal, state, and local education needs and programs.

The board will also address the need to improve awareness of the program, both to eligible members of the military and to communities with a need for highly skilled teachers in key subject areas. The board will also be required to prepare an annual report to Congress on key elements of the program, including the number of participants in the program, what subjects they are teaching, and where they are serving.

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